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**A Statement Made by Russian President Vladimir Putin on December 13, 2001,
Regarding the Decision of the Administration of the United States of America to
Withdraw from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty of 1972
*televised by federal channels***

The US Administration today announced that it will withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty in six months' time.

The Treaty does indeed allow each of the parties to withdraw from it under exceptional circumstances. The leadership of the United States has spoken about it repeatedly and this step has not come as a surprise to us. But we believe this decision to be mistaken.

As is known, Russia, like the United States and unlike other nuclear powers, has long possessed an effective system to overcome anti-missile defense. So, I can say with full confidence that the decision made by the President of the United States does not pose a threat to the national security of the Russian Federation.

At the same time our country elected not to accept the insistent proposals on the part of the US to jointly withdraw from the ABM Treaty and did everything it could to preserve the Treaty. I still think that this is a correct and valid position. Russia was guided above all by the aim of preserving and strengthening the international legal foundation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation of mass destruction weapons.

The ABM Treaty is one of the supporting elements of the legal system in this field. That system was created through joint efforts during the past decades.

It is our conviction that the development of the situation in the present world dictates a certain logic of actions.

Now that the world has been confronted with new threats one cannot allow a legal vacuum to be formed in the sphere of strategic stability. One should not undermine the regimes of non-proliferation of mass destruction weapons.

I believe that the present level of bilateral relations between the Russian Federation and the US should not only be preserved but should be used for working out a new framework of strategic relations as soon as possible.

Along with the problem of anti-missile defense a particularly important task under these conditions is putting a legal seal on the achieved agreements on further radical, irreversible and verifiable cuts of strategic offensive weapons, in our opinion to the level of 1,500-2,200 nuclear warheads for each side.

In conclusion I would like to note that Russia will continue to adhere firmly to its course in world affairs aimed at strengthening strategic stability and international security.

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